



State Representative Steve Conway

29th District

2005 Legislative Report



I am very pleased that we finished the 2005 Legislative Session on time - one of the few times in our state's 116 years of existence. I believe we accomplished great things this year. We ended years of gridlock and made some of the largest new investments in jobs and education this state has ever seen. These investments will have a significant impact on education and jobs in Pierce County.

Steve Conway

Representative Steve Conway

307 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

E-mail: Conway.steve@leg.wa.gov

Website: <http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/conway>

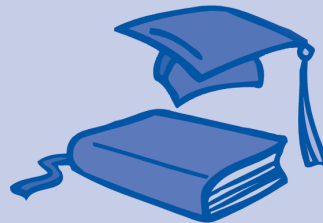
Toll-free Hotline: 800-562-6000

Office: 360-786-7906

Committee Assignments:

Commerce and Labor, Chair
Appropriations
Finance
Select Committee on Pension Policy

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING



I am especially pleased the Legislature enhanced support for our students and teachers by fully funding the voter-approved education initiatives to reduce class sizes and improve teacher pay, I-728 and I-732. In addition, as students work to meet graduation requirements, we expanded support for resources like the Learning Assistance Program.

Given the growing demand for enrollment slots at our 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities, I'm pleased we also funded room for 7,900 more students. I have always been a strong advocate of, and helped engineer, the connection between our community colleges and our universities. This relationship is strengthened with the welcomed expansion of UW Tacoma into a 4-year institution, with a priority given to local students.

This is great news for businesses that depend on an educated workforce in our changing economy, as well as for workers who need the family-wage jobs an education can provide.

As Chair of the House Commerce and Labor Committee, I led a discussion of ways we can improve the job opportunities for Washington's workers. We must close the gap between the supply and demand for skilled workers; enable workers to fully benefit from a changing economy; and assist disadvantaged youth, persons with disabilities, recent immigrants, and low-wage workers in moving up the job ladder.

I believe a skilled work force is fundamental for our economic vitality. That's why I prime-sponsored legislation to uphold the Apprenticeship program, helping to keep a solid work force in the building trades. Our communities need more skilled workers, especially for projects financed by tax dollars. Using apprentices on these projects helps build a strong family-wage work force for the future. Apprenticeships are the most effective tool for workforce training, but there haven't been enough programs for qualified citizens.

The measure calls for apprentices to comprise at least 15 percent of the total labor hours on public projects that are estimated to cost \$1 million or more. Large public projects such as the King County Justice Center and Qwest Field have successfully implemented these requirements.

Education is the great equalizer in our economy. Many skilled workers in our construction industry come from apprenticeship programs, which require between 2,000 and 10,000 hours of on-the-job experience, as well as additional technical instruction. Citizens who have solid education and training do their jobs better. They earn a better paycheck, too.

HEALTH CARE



A huge driver of rising costs for state government is the escalating price of health care. To deal with the crisis in our health care system and help bring down the cost of coverage and increase access, we passed several pieces of legislation including:

- ✓ Restoring \$80 million of \$82 million in lost federal mental health funding used to serve people not eligible for Medicaid and to provide services not covered by Medicaid.
- ✓ Creating a Joint Select Committee on Public Health Financing to review and recommend funding sources for public health services.
- ✓ Requiring mental health coverage as part of health insurance plans, just as we cover any other illness.
- ✓ Allowing small businesses, uninsured and underinsured, the ability to join the state drug buying consortium.
- ✓ Setting in motion a plan to provide health care coverage to all children in Washington by the year 2010, while maintaining 100,000 enrollments in the Basic Health Plan and expanding health insurance to cover mental health.
- ✓ Fully funding the Basic Health Plan.
- ✓ Honoring collective bargaining agreements for home care workers and state employees, a priority in the 29th Legislative District.
- ✓ Allowing citizens the ability to buy cheaper prescription drugs by re-importing American-made drugs from Canada and by participating in a state-sponsored purchasing pool.
- ✓ Finally passing Relief for Problem Gamblers. I prime-sponsored HB 1031 to provide assistance to problem gamblers to help them break their addiction. The funds will come from state lottery revenue along with a 0.1 percent tax on gambling establishments.

THE CAPITAL BUDGET



Our state has over \$750 million in unmet school construction needs. This year's Capital Budget invests \$600 million in schools, funding emergency repairs, modernization, and new construction — the largest K-12 construction budget in state history. The Capital Budget also spends nearly \$900 million to increase capacity at our public colleges and universities.

With this new money, we can get our students out of those portable classrooms and reduce overcrowding in our schools. It also reduces the looming burden for our local school districts, emphasizing state support for our schools rather than increasing the burden on local property-tax payers.

In total, over \$7 million will go to local schools, including: Fern Hill Elementary School, Lincoln High School, Wilson High School, Ford Middle School, and Keithley Middle School.

The Capital Budget also funds the construction of other projects in our community. I advocated for this year's budget to include projects located in our community such as:

- Lakewood Boys and Girls Clubs - \$500,000
- Tall Ships Moorage - \$300,000
- Tacoma Central Treatment Plant Upgrade - \$25.8 million
- Lake Wapato Cleanup - \$50,000
- Bates Technical College - Learning Resource Center/Vocational - \$15.1 million

In addition to securing \$1 million in new construction money for the new LeMay museum project, I also advocated for tax breaks worth nearly \$4 million to help get this project off the ground.

This total investment of \$42.8 million means job opportunities for our construction workers immediately, and ultimately, an improvement to the quality of life and economy of the 29th District.

29th Legislative District

State Representative

Steve Conway

29th District

KEEPING
OUR
ROADS
SAFE



While we did make great strides toward fixing our transportation system, there is currently an effort underway to overturn the gas tax increase passed this session - a .3 cent increase this year, followed by a .3 cent increase the next two years. The Legislature has designated this money for repairing and replacing structures that are in danger of collapsing and endangering lives. We need a transportation system that is safe, efficient, and convenient. I look at the \$8.5 billion investment in our infrastructure as essential for keeping our roads safe and our economy running smoothly.

In total there are over twenty Pierce County traffic and road safety improvement projects included in the new transportation plan funded by the gas tax, including I-5 and SR 16, and the cross-base highway project.

We also provide major accountability improvements. We take the appointment of the Department of Transportation secretary away from an unelected transportation commission and put that appointment in the governor's hands. For the first time, we also facilitate performance audits of transportation agencies.

CREATING
JOBS



The Job
Development Fund.

I voted in favor of HB 1903, which creates a fund to provide grants to cities, towns and other government entities for projects that create local jobs, stimulate economic development, and promote community growth. These cities and counties

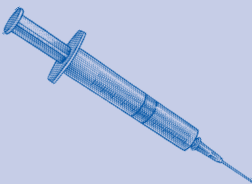
often do not have the resources available to invest in their economic infrastructure. That's why I am pleased the state is now able to help these local governments create and keep good jobs here in Washington.

Unemployment equity. I also prime-sponsored a bill to right the unintended wrongs now hitting construction workers because of changes made in unemployment-insurance law a couple years ago. The unemployment-insurance system wasn't fair for many citizens who are *literally* building our state. **We need these adjustments so construction workers and other workers are treated fairly.**

This legislation is about helping people hurt by the old law, and who are now in danger of falling into poverty. It's about families. Construction work goes on year-

round, and it's affected by economic cycles and weather. It isn't a seasonal industry. A lot of men and women in the industry rely to a big extent on unemployment benefits during periods between their jobs.

HALTING
THE METH
EPIDEMIC



Medicines that are called precursor drugs. These products often used in the manufacturing of meth must be kept in a location that isn't accessible to customers without the assistance of an employee.

This bill is a well-tested formula used by several other states to help stop the epidemic of methamphetamine use. When they enacted a similar anti-meth law, the state of Oklahoma cut the number of meth labs by between 60 and 80 percent. By July of last year, Oklahoma slashed meth production by 124 labs from the same time period a year earlier.

Methamphetamine is killing people in our communities and costing millions of public dollars. That's why we approved legislation that will take a big step toward trouncing the meth nightmare in Pierce County and all across the rest of Washington. The measure seeks to get some control over

HONORING
THOSE
WHO
SERVE:



One of my first actions as a legislator last session was co-sponsoring a resolution to honor those who serve in Washington's National Guard. It is important they be recognized for the daily sacrifices they make to protect Washington; from their disaster-relief efforts at home, to their duty overseas.

Honoring their service to our state and country is the right thing to do, but it is only a small token of our appreciation for their commitment to the safety and security of Washington's citizens. This session, we passed more legislation than ever before for veterans from all branches of the military, in order to improve the safety net for troops when their service ends.

Some of the legislation passed will:

- ✓ Expand tuition waivers that schools can offer for families of veterans killed or totally disabled in action. The families of veterans who are listed as missing in action or who are prisoners of war are also eligible. (HB 1174)
- ✓ Make sure that services are provided for low-income or disadvantaged veterans and their families. The bill would also see to it that help is

provided to the families of those veterans who have passed away. (HB 1189)

- ✓ Include the contribution made by women to the war effort during WWII as part of the WWII Oral History Project being conducted to preserve their stories for future generations. (HB 1592)

I also sponsored a bill to honor our veterans by commissioning an armed forces license plate with the proceeds funding veterans' services. (HB 1065)

Military families have long been an important and welcome addition to our community. They have provided so much to our lives. That's why I will always be an advocate on their behalf.



Rep. Conway attends the signing of HB 2255
– legislation he prime-sponsored to improve
benefits in unemployment insurance for
Washington's working families.